

Lucernemines Coke Works, Coke Ovens
Rochester & Pittsburgh Coal & Iron Company
.5 miles E of Lucerne, adjacent to Yellow Creek
Lucerne Vicinity
Indiana
Pennsylvania

HAER No. PA-264-A

HAER,
PA,
32-LUCE.V,
1-A-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
LUCERNEMINES COKE WORKS, COKE OVENS

HAER
PA
32-LUCE.V,
1-A-

HAER No. PA-264-A

Location: .5 miles East of Lucerne, adjacent to Yellow Creek, Northeast of Homer City, Lucerne Vicinity, Center Township, Indiana County, Pennsylvania

USGS Quad: Indiana (1:24000)
UTM: 17/657660/4491250

Date of Construction: 1952

Builder: Rochester & Pittsburgh Coal Company

Present Owner: Shenango, Inc.

Present Use: Abandoned

Significance: The Rochester & Pittsburgh Coal Company ovens at Lucerne is the most intact coke-processing complex of the historic Indiana County coal industry.

Project Information: In February 1987, the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) and the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) began a multi-year historical and architectural documentation project in southwestern Pennsylvania. Carried out in conjunction with America's Industrial Heritage Project (AIHP), HAER undertook a comprehensive inventory of Blair, Cambria, Fayette, and Indiana counties as the first step in identifying the region's surviving historic engineering works and industrial resources.

The results of this project have been published in Indiana County, Pennsylvania: An Inventory of Historic Engineering and Industrial Sites (1993), edited by Ken Rose and produced by HABS/HAER for the National Park Service.

Compiler: Richard Quinn, Historian

LUCERNEMINES COKE WORKS, COKE OVENS
HAER No. PA-264-A (Page 2)

History:

DESCRIPTION: The Rochester & Pittsburgh Coal Company coke ovens at Lucernemines, built in 1952, extend along the banks of Yellow Creek southeast of the company town of Lucerne. The complex of 264 beehive coke ovens extends in two linear strings east and southeast from the main coal processing area. The beehive ovens are built back-to-back, but still separate. (That is, not like other oven complexes built at the time, with connecting holes to allow mechanized equipment to push the finished coke through the ovens into loading cars, rather than draw the coke out.) They are built of refractory brick in a domed or beehive pattern, set within a masonry enclosure of concrete block. The loading doors, now removed, were surrounded with regular face brick, an uncommon practice. The area around the beehives and within the concrete enclosure is dirt-filled, to allow better insulation of the ovens. Trunnel holes on top allowed the ovens to be filled by specially-designed loading cars which brought the coal from a nearby tippie; these were powered by electric locomotives operating on a catenary system, part of which survives. Tracks located below the mouths of the ovens, now removed, carried off the finished coke drawn from the ovens.

HISTORY: The Rochester & Pittsburgh Coal Company ovens at Lucerne is the most intact coke-processing complex of the historic Indiana County coal industry. The ovens were built by the R&P in 1952, and operated by the company until December 1957, when they were sold to Shenango, Inc. Shenango continued to operate the ovens until the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Resources forced its closure in October 1972. Coke made at the plant was of a superior grade, and was used in blast furnaces for reducing ore to pig iron. The site is abandoned, though the ovens survive largely intact.

Sources:

Cooper, Eileen Mountjoy. *Rochester & Pittsburgh Coal Company: The First One Hundred Years*. Indiana, PA: Rochester & Pittsburgh Coal Company, 1982.

Frampton, Tracy Edwin and Jodie Molnar Hedrick. Pennsylvania Historical Resource Survey Form 063-WH-18, Lucerne Coke Ovens.